

COMMUNICATION SKILLS

LESSON 1: THE COMMUNICATION PROCESS



audience analysis
channel
data
feedback
mixed messages
noise
nonverbal
receiver
sender
setting
verbal

INTRODUCTION

Every day, one of your main activities is communicating with others. You communicate at home, at school, with your friends, and in the community. For some of you, you are also communicating in a job environment. For adults, communication at work can be the difference between success and failure.

THE NEED FOR COMMUNICATION

You fulfill many different needs through communication, and effective communication can give you considerable pleasure. It pleases you when you have a stimulating conversation with a friend. You are also pleased when you participate in a group discussion that leads to a solution for a problem. You are happy if a letter you write is answered, and you are told that the recipient took what you said seriously.

Sometimes, however, communication does not work, and you end up feeling frustrated.

You have a disagreement with a friend and do not know what to say to fix it. There may be certain subjects your parents do not want to discuss at all. You write a message to someone and that person completely misunderstands what you said.

Even though we have been communicating since birth, we are not always as effective as we could be. Effective communication seems to be a problem for many people.

All communication depends on understanding others and having them understand you. Much of your communication is intended to influence what people think and feel. Most of the time you want someone to take some action as the result of your communication. You want a friend to spend vacation time with you; you want your friends to like each other; you want your parents to give you permission to go somewhere.

Perhaps your most important need is to maintain and improve your relationships with others. You use communication to discover other people's needs and to share your own needs with other people.

Our need for communication is important in all areas of our lives. To live is to communicate.

A DEFINITION OF COMMUNICATION

Communication is a process in which people are able to transfer meaning among themselves. The communication process

allows people to share information, ideas, and feelings. This is the transfer of meaning. Where no meaning is transferred, no communication has taken place.

SEVEN COMMUNICATION SKILLS

There are many ways to communicate. Your ability to read, listen, think, study, write, remember, and speak are the seven communication skills that will help you to express your feelings, knowledge, and ideas. Communication is innate within everybody; from the cries of a baby, to the smile of a friend, to the handshake of your doctor. Everybody uses communication skills differently. In JROTC, as in your other high school courses, you will have many opportunities to improve these skills.

ELEMENTS OF COMMUNICATION

The communication process is made up of various elements. These elements are communicators (**senders**), messages, **receivers**, **channels** (written words, sound, sight, radio, television), **feedback**, **noise**, and **setting**.

- The communicator is the originator of the message. The speaker, writer, artist, and architect are all communicators.
- The message is made up of ideas, **data**, and feelings the communicator wants to share. The medium may be a speech, essay, painting, or building.
- The channel is the route traveled by the message as it goes between the communicator and the receivers. Airways may provide the channel for communicating the speaker's message; lightwaves are the channels for the writer, artist, and architect.
- The receiver is one or more individuals for whom the message is intended. The

communicator must gain the receiver's attention to have effective communication.

- Feedback allows communicators to find out whether they are "getting through" to the receivers. You get feedback from your instructors, your parents, and your friends.
- Noise is interference that keeps a message from being understood. Physical noise keeps a message from being heard. For example, the physical noise of a loud television program may interfere with reading a letter. Psychological noise occurs when the communicators and the receivers are distracted by something. For instance, the psychological noise caused by hunger can prevent concentration.



COMMUNICATING EFFECTIVELY

Once you understand the process of communication, you can begin to understand why communication does or does not work.

In an ideal situation, the message is perceived in the way it was intended. For example, you write an apology to your friend for a mistake that you made. If the friend accepts the apology, the communication worked. If the friend was offended by your

message, and the apology was not accepted, then the communication did not work.



Your communication may not have worked due to a problem with the message, the channel used may not have been the best choice, or psychological noise may have interfered. Asking the right questions about why communication did not work is the best way to improve communication skills.

Most of us already have considerable communication skills. We have been sending and receiving **verbal** and **nonverbal** symbols all our lives.

- Verbal symbols utilize the words in a language to stand for a particular thing or idea.
- Nonverbal symbols allow us to communicate without using words. Facial expressions and gestures are examples of nonverbal symbols.

Nevertheless, we have all had times when we have not communicated as effectively as we should. You may have received a lower grade on a paper than you expected.

You may have unintentionally hurt someone's feelings. An instructor may not have understood a question when you asked it in class.

You can work to increase the likelihood of effective communication. There are certain basic steps to follow when preparing any oral or written communication.

The six steps listed are not always used in sequence, nor are they exclusive of each other. You will want to tailor them to your own style and approach, and you will not use all these steps each time you communicate. These steps will help you focus your attention on how to increase your effectiveness as a communicator.

STEPS IN EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION

1. Analyze your purpose and your audience. Make sure you know why you are communicating and to whom you are addressing your ideas. Knowing about the receivers of your communication is called an **audience analysis**.
2. Conduct the research. Use a variety of resources.
3. Support your ideas. Find facts, figures, statistics, and explanations that give credibility to your ideas. The more you can back up your ideas, the more your audience will understand what you are communicating.
4. Get organized. Use an outline or notes to organize your ideas into a logical sequence. A logical sequence helps your audience follow along with you.
5. Draft and edit. Use language to your best advantage. There may be many ways to express the same idea. Look for the best way. If you are unclear about what you are saying, you may be sending **mixed messages**.

6. Get feedback. Test your work with one or more people. Testing your communication with others will ensure that you are not the only one that can make sense out of what you are saying.

CONCLUSION

Communication is how we transfer ideas among ourselves. Communication does not always work. Your message has to be perceived the way you intended it to be perceived.

You must understand your audience and your purpose. You should conduct research and support your ideas. You should decide on an organization for your information and outline your ideas.

Follow the basic steps and people will pay attention to your ideas and be impressed by your ability to express yourself.